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this type of taboo is given a mythological origin, new taboos of the same type arise from time to time. It is claimed that in former times people who had the same taboo were exogamous. I should hardly accept the author's theory in so far as they see in these phenomena, "a degenerate totemism." A certain social community exists also among children born in the same month.

The observations on magic and divination contain much that corroborates the more recent descriptions of African fetishes.

The notes on agriculture, hunting, and fishing may be only mentioned here. The traditional history of the tribes in regard to the introduction of Indian corn and maniok is evidently based on facts. Among the devices for fishing a basket trap with release and floats, under which the fish assemble are perhaps worthy of special note. The description of the houses and villages is rather brief, but that of personal dress and adornment, cicatrization, and treatment of teeth is full and accompanied by many instructive illustrations. The various industries are adequately described, but the most important portion of this part of the book is the chapter on art with its wealth of illustration and of information regarding native names of designs. After a discussion of realistic motives, the authors describe the textile designs and their curious names. The observation that the designs are always named according to certain component elements, and the differences in naming that occur in the woman's art of weaving, and in the man's art of carving (p. 216 et seq., 227), although the men apply textile motives, are of great theoretical importance. A number of traditions and brief notes on the language are also given. In a final chapter are contained ethnographical notes on the Basongo Meno, a group of related tribes.

If in view of the excellence of this work a wish might be expressed, it would be that at least legends, poetry, proverbs, and related subjects had been given in the authentic form of original records, the importance of which does not seem to be recognized yet by all ethnologists.

FRANZ BOAS.

The Niger and the West Sudan: the West African's Note-Book. By A. J. N. TREMEARNE. London: Hodder and Stoughton (Arthur H. Wheeler and Co.), 1910. 8°, pp. 151.

Tremearne's book is intended as an assistance, a *vade mecum*, for the man going to British West African Colonies. It gives history, conditions, hints, advice upon a hundred points where detailed information is necessary. It is called a "notebook" because it is largely compiled from many

sources, in the very words of the original, and makes no pretence of being a literary production. One third of the book, that is fifty pages, is devoted to native peoples, who are considered under chapter headings—the Filani and others, the Hausas and others, the Yorubas and others. While these chapters have appeared as independent articles elsewhere they are here usefully presented together. Tremearne prefers the spelling Filani to the more common Fulah. In the ethnographic part of his work, as elsewhere, the matter is chiefly quotation. In each case, however, the author adds some personal comment in which he tries to make some deductions from the mass of conflicting statements. Chiefly interested in sources, he sees in the Filani a people where Berber and Negro have mixed; in the Hausas, a Semitic population from the region of Ethiopia or west from there, which has Hamitic and Negro infusion and which has moved westward; in the Yoruba, a population more distinctly Negro, but showing influences from north and east. It is not easy to grasp his views exactly.

FREDERICK STARR.

Nigerian Studies; or the Religious and Political System of the Yoruba. By R. E. DENNETT. London: Macmillan and Co., 1910. 8°, pp. xvii, 235.

This is Mr Dennett's fourth book on African peoples. Heretofore he has dealt with the Fjort, near the mouth of the Congo; this time he studies Nigerian populations. Everyone must appreciate the good-will and the industry of the author but his style is always confused to the degree that most students can gain only confused hints from reading him. This time he is dealing with populations which have already been described by others and his lines of treatment are more clear and decisive, and he makes many quotations which enable him to be better followed than usual. His proof too has been read by Mr Joyce, which has perhaps given the work more consistency and form than it would otherwise have. Even with these advantages, the confusion persists nor does Dennett's explanatory chapter completely explain it. Everyone realizes the difficulty of securing complete, consistent, and satisfactory information from natives—especially regarding social, governmental, and religious matters; and the vice of rounding out what one secures, by such filling as fancy, theory, or literary ideal demands, can not be too severely deprecated; but there is a middle course and fortunately our best field workers succeed in finding it. The man whose mind is clear and systematic can present things, even fragmentary and indefinite things, in comprehensible form.